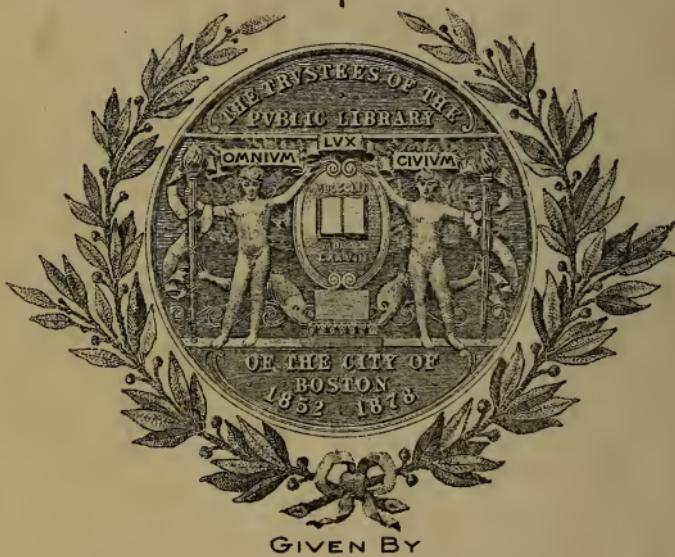




N^o 5448.112



H. H. Loder.

Bentham

T H E

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Convict's ADDRESS

T O

His Unhappy Brethren.

Delivered in the Chapel of NEWGATE, on
FRIDAY, JUNE 6, 1777.

5448.112

I acknowledge my Faults: and my Sin is ever before me.

PSALM li. 3.

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To the Reverend Mr. VILLETTÉ,
Ordinary of NEWGATE.

REVEREND SIR,

THE following Address owes its present public appearance to you. I read it to you after it was composed, and you thought it proper to be delivered, as was intended. You heard it delivered, and are pleased to think that its publication will be useful.— To a poor and abject worm, like myself, this is a sufficient inducement to that publication; and I heartily pray God, that in your hands it may frequently and effectually administer to the instruction and comfort of the miserable!

I am, dear Sir,

With my sincerest thanks for your humane and friendly attention,

Your truly sorrowful,

and much afflicted Brother in Christ,

Friday, June 6,
1777.

WILLIAM DODD.

A N

A D D R E S S, &c.

My dear and unhappy Fellow-Prisoners,

CONSIDERING my peculiar circumstances and situation, I cannot think myself justified, if I do not deliver to you, in sincere Christian love, some of my serious thoughts on our present awful state.

In the sixteenth chapter of the *Acts of the Apostles*, you read a memorable story respecting *Paul* and *Silas*, who, for preaching the gospel, were cast by the magistrates into prison, ver. 23---and, after having received many stripes, were committed to the *jaylor*, with a strict charge to keep them safely. Accordingly he thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. At midnight Paul and Silas, supported by the testimony

testimony of a good conscience, prayed, and sang praises to God, and the prisoners heard them ; and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken ; and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's chains were loosed. The keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, in the greatest distress, as might well be imagined, drew his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.---But Paul cried with a loud voice, Do thyself no harm, for we are all here. ---The keeper, calling for a light, and finding his prisoners thus freed from their bonds by the imperceptible agency of divine power, was irresistibly convinced that these men were not offenders against the law, but martyrs to the truth : he sprang in therefore, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, SIRS,
WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED ?

'What must I do to be saved ? is the important question, which it becomes every human being to study from the first hour of reason to the last : but which we, my fellow prisoners, ought to consider with particular diligence
and

and intenseness of meditation. Had it not been forgotten, or neglected by us, we had never appeared in this place. A little time for recollection and amendment is yet allowed us by the mercy of the law. Of this little time let no particle be lost. Let us fill our remaining life with all the duties which our present condition allows us to practise. Let us make one earnest effort for salvation!—And oh! heavenly Father, who desirest not the death of a sinner, grant that this effort may not be in vain!

To teach others what *they must do to be saved*, has long been my employment and profession. You see with what confusion and dishonour I now stand before you---no more in the pulpit of instruction, but on this humble seat with yourselves.—You are not to consider me now as a man authorised to form the manners, or direct the conscience, and speaking with the authority of a pastor to his flock.—I am here guilty, like yourselves, of a capital offence; and sentenced, like yourselves, to publick and shameful death. My profession, which has given me stronger convictions of my duty than most of you can be supposed to have attained, and has extended my views to the consequences of

of wickedness farther than your observation is likely to have reached, has loaded my sin with peculiar aggravations ; and I entreat you to join your prayers with mine, that my sorrow may be proportionate to my guilt !

I am now, like you, enquiring, *what I must do to be saved?* and stand here to communicate to you what that enquiry suggests. Hear me with attention, my fellow prisoners ; and in your melancholy hours of retirement, consider well what I offer to you from the sincerity of my good-will ; and from the deepest conviction of a penitent heart.

Salvation is promised to us Christians, on the terms of *Faith, Obedience, and Repentance*. I shall therefore endeavour to shew, how, in the short interval between this moment and death, we may exert *faith*, perform *obedience*, and exercise *repentance*, in a manner which our heavenly Father may, in his infinite mercy, vouchsafe to accept.

I. *Faith* is the foundation of all Christian virtue. It is that *without which it is impossible to please God*. I shall therefore consider, first, How *faith* is to be particularly exerted by us in our present state.

Faith

Faith is a full and undoubting confidence in the declarations made by God in the holy Scriptures ; a sincere reception of the doctrines taught by our blessed Saviour, with a firm assurance that he died to take away the sins of the world, and that we have, each of us, a part in the boundless benefits of the universal Sacrifice!

To this *faith* we must have recourse at all times, but particularly if we find ourselves tempted to despair. If thoughts arise in our minds, which suggest that we have sinned beyond the hope of pardon, and that therefore it is vain to seek for reconciliation by repentance ; we must remember how God willeth that every man should be saved, and that those who obey his call, however late, shall not be rejected.---If we are tempted to think that the injuries we have done are unrepaired, and therefore repentance is vain ; let us remember that the reparation which is impossible is not required ; that sincerely to will, is to do, in the sight of Him to whom all hearts are open ; and that what is deficient in our endeavours is supplied by the merits of Him who died to redeem us.

Yet let us likewise be careful, lest an erroneous opinion of the all-sufficiency of our Saviour's merits lull us into carelessness and security. His merits are indeed all-sufficient! But he has prescribed the terms on which they are to operate. He died to save sinners, but to save only those sinners that repent. Peter, who denied him, was forgiven, but he obtained his pardon *by weeping bitterly*. They who have lived in perpetual regularity of duty, and are free from any gross or visible transgression, are yet but *unprofitable servants* :-- What then are *we*, whose crimes are hastening us to the grave before our time?--Let us *work with fear and trembling*, but still let us endeavour to *work out our salvation*. Let us hope without presumption; let us fear without desperation; and let our faith animate us to that which we were to consider,

Secondly, “*Sincere Obedience to the laws of God.*” Our obedience, for the short time yet remaining, is restrained to a narrow circle. Those duties, which are called social and relative, are for the most part out of our power. We can contribute very little to the general happiness of mankind, while on those whom kindred

kindred and friendship have allied to us, we have brought disgrace and sorrow. We can only benefit the publick by an example of contrition, and fortify our friends against temptation by warning and admonition.

The obedience left us now to practise is “ submission to the will of God, and calm acquiescence in his wisdom and his justice.” We must not allow ourselves to repine at those miseries which have followed our offences, but suffer, with silent humility and resigned patience, the punishment which we deserve; remembering that, according to the apostle’s decision, no praise is due to them who bear with *patience to be buffeted for their faults.*

When we consider the wickedness of our past lives, and the danger of having been summoned to the final judgement without preparation, we shall, I hope, gradually rise so much above the gross conceptions of human nature, as to return thanks to God for what once seemed the most dreadful of all evils---our detection and conviction!----We shrink back, by immediate and instinctive teravour, from the publick eye, turned as it is upon us with indignation and contempt. Imprison-

ment is afflictive, and ignominious death is fearful! But let us compare our condition with that which our actions might reasonably have incurred.—The robber might have died in the act of violence, by lawful resistance. The man of fraud might have sunk into the grave, while he was enjoying the gain of his artifice:—and *where then had been our hope?* We have now leisure for thought; we have opportunities of instruction: and whatever we suffer from offended laws, may yet reconcile ourselves to God, who, if we sincerely *seek him*, will assuredly be *found*.

But how are we to *seek the Lord*? By the way which he himself hath appointed; by humble, fervent, and frequent prayer.—Some hours of worship are appointed us; let us duly observe them. Some assistance to our devotion is supplied; let us thankfully accept it. But let us not rest in formality and proscription: let us call upon God night and day. When, in the review of the times which we have past, any offence arises to our thoughts, let us humbly implore forgiveness; and for those faults (and many they are and must be) which we cannot recollect, let us solicit mercy in general petitions. But it must be

our

our constant care, that we pray not merely with our lips; but that when we lament our sins, we are really humbled in self-abhorrence;* and that, when we call for mercy, we raise our thoughts to hope and trust in the goodness of God, and the merits of our blessed Saviour, Jesus Christ.

The reception of the *holy sacrament*, to which we shall be called, in the most solemn manner, perhaps a few hours before we die, is the highest act of Christian worship. At that awful moment it will become us to drop for ever all worldly thoughts, to fix our hopes solely upon Christ, whose death is represented; and to consider ourselves as no longer connected with mortality.---And possibly, it may please God to afford *us* some consolation, some secret intimations of acceptance and forgiveness. But these radiations of favour are not always felt by the sincerest penitents. To the greater part of those whom angels stand ready to receive, nothing is granted in this world beyond rational *hope*;---and with *hope*, founded on *promise*, we may well be satisfied.

But

* See *Job*, chap. xlvi. ver. 6.

But such promises of salvation are made only to the *penitent*. It is requisite then that we consider,

Thirdly, “How *Repentance* is to be exercised,” Repentance, in the general state of Christian life, is such a sorrow for sin as produces a change of manners, and an amendment of life. It is that disposition of mind, by which he *who stole, steals no more*; by which the *wicked man turneth away from his wickedness, and doth that which is lawful and right*. And to the man thus reformed, it is expressly promised, that *he shall save his soul alive*.* Of this repentance the proofs are visible, and the reality certain, always to the penitent, and commonly to the church with which he communicates; because the state of the mind is discovered by the outward actions.---But of the repentance which *our* condition requires and admits, no such evidence can appear; for

* There cannot be a stronger exemplification of this idea than the conduct of the *Taylor*, who uttered the question, with which we commenced our enquiry---*What shall I do to be saved?*---What a change of mind and manners was wrought in him by the power of God! Read *Acts*, chap. xvi.

for to us many crimes and many virtues are made impossible by confinement; and the shortness of the time which is before us, gives little power, even to ourselves, of distinguishing the effects of terror from those of conviction; of deciding, whether our present sorrow for sin proceeds from abhorrence of guilt, or dread of punishment; whether the violence of our inordinate passions be totally subdued by the fear of God, or only crushed and restrained by the temporary force of present calamity.

Our repentance is like that of other sinners on the death-bed; but with this advantage, that our danger is not greater, and our strength is more. Our faculties are not impaired by weakness of body. We come to the great work not withered by pains, nor clouded by the fumes of disease, but with minds capable of continued attention, and with bodies, of which we need have no care! We may therefore better discharge this tremendous duty, and better judge of our own performance.

Of the efficacy of a death-bed repentance many have disputed; but we have no leisure for controversy. Fix in your minds this decision, “Repentance is a change of the heart,

of an evil to a good disposition." When that change is made, repentance is complete. God will consider that life as amended, which would have been amended if he had spared it. Repentance in the sight of man, even of the penitent, is not known but by its *fruits*: but our Creator sees the fruit, in the blossom, or the seed. He knows those resolutions which are fixed, those conversions which would be permanent; and will receive them who are qualified by holy desires for works of righteousness, without exacting from them those outward duties which the shortness of their lives hindered them from performing.

Nothing therefore remains, but that we apply with all our speed, and with all our strength, to rectify our desires, and purify our thoughts; that we set God before us in all his goodness and terrors; that we consider him as the Father and the Judge of all the earth; as a Father, desirous to save; as a Judge, who cannot pardon unrepented iniquity: that we fall down before him self-condemned, and excite in our hearts an intense detestation of those crimes which have provoked him; with vehement and steady resolutions, that if life were granted us, it should be spent hereafter

in the practice of our duty :* that we pray the Giver of grace to strengthen and impress these holy thoughts, and to accept our repentance, though late, and in its beginnings violent : that we improve every good motion by diligent prayer ; and having *declared* and *confirmed*† our *faith* by the holy communion,-- we deliver ourselves into his hands, in firm hope, that he who created and redeemed us will not suffer us to perish. *Rom. v. 8. viii. 32.*

The condition, without which forgiveness is not to be obtained, is that we forgive others. There is always a danger lest men, fresh from a trial in which life has been lost, should re-

* See 2 Cor. ch. 5. v. 14, 15.

† I would have this expression to be particularly attended to---While as a dying man, and with all possible sincerity of soul, I add, that if I could wish to *declare* my faith, I know not of any words in which I could do it so well, and so perfectly to my satisfaction, as in the *Communion* service of our Church : and if I would wish to *confirm* that faith, I know not of any appointed method so thoroughly adapted to that end as *participation* in that communion itself. -- See particularly in this service, the *Exhortation*, *Confession*, prayer beginning *We do not presume*, &c. --- *Consecration* -- and prayer after receiving, *O Lord and heavenly Father*, &c. --- Convicts should diligently and repeatedly read over this service before they communicate.

member with resentment and malignity the prosecutor, the witnesses, or the judges. It is indeed scarcely possible, that with all the prejudices of an interest so weighty, and so affecting, the convict should think otherwise, than that he has been treated, in some part of the process, with unnecessary severity. In this opinion he is perhaps singular, and therefore probably mistaken. But there is no time for disquisition: we must try to find the shortest way to peace. It is easier to forgive than to reason right. He that has been injuriously or unnecessarily harrassed, has one opportunity more of proving his sincerity, by forgiving the wrong, and praying for his enemy.

It is the duty of a penitent to repair, so far as he has the power, the injury which he has done. What we can do, is commonly nothing more than to leave the world an example of contrition. On the dreadful day, when the sentence of the law has its full force, some will be found to have affected a shameless bravery, or negligent intrepidity. Such is not the proper behaviour of a convicted criminal. To rejoice in tortures is the privilege of a martyr; to meet death with intrepidity is the right only of innocence, if in any human being inno-

cence

cence could be found. Of him, whose life is shortened by his crimes, the last duties are humility and self-abasement. We owe to God sincere repentance; we owe to man the appearance of repentance.---We ought not to propagate an opinion, that he who lived in wickedness can die with courage. If the serenity or gaiety with which some men have ended a life of guilt, were unfeigned, they can be imputed only to ignorance or stupidity, or, what is more horrid, to voluntary intoxication:---if they were artificial and hypocritical, they were acts of deception, the useless and unprofitable crimes of pride unmortified, and obstinacy unsubdued.

There is yet another crime possible, and, as there is reason to believe, sometimes committed in the last moment, on the margin of eternity.---Men have died with a stedfast denial of crimes, of which it is very difficult to suppose them innocent. By what equivocation or reserve they may have reconciled their consciences to falsehood, if their consciences were at all consulted, it is impossible to know. But if they thought, that when they were to die, they paid their legal forfeit, and that the world had no farther demand upon them;

that therefore they might, by keeping their own secrets, try to leave behind them a disputable reputation ; and that the falsehood was harmless, because none were injured ;---they had very little considered the nature of society. One of the principal parts of national felicity arises from a wise and impartial administration of justice. Every man reposes upon the tribunals of his country the stability of possession, and the serenity of life. He therefore who unjustly exposes the courts of judicature to suspicion, either of partiality or error, not only does an injury to those who dispense the laws, but diminishes the public confidence in the laws themselves, and shakes the foundation of public tranquillity.

For my own part, I confess, with deepest compunction, the crime which has brought me to this place ; and admit the justice of my sentence, while I am sinking under its severity. And I earnestly exhort you, my fellow prisoners, to acknowledge the offences which have been already proved ; and to bequeath to our country that confidence in public justice, without which there can be neither peace nor safety.

As few men suffer for their first offences, and most convicts are conscious of more crimes than have been brought within judicial cognizance, it is necessary to enquire how far confession ought to be extended. Peace of mind, or desire of instruction, may sometimes demand, that to the minister, whose counsel is requested, a long course of evil life should be discovered :---but of this every man must determine for himself.---To the publick, every man, before he departs from life, is obliged to confess those acts which have brought, or may bring unjust suspicion upon others ; and to convey such information, as may enable those who have suffered losses to obtain restitution.

Whatever good remains in our power we must diligently perform.---We must prevent, to the utmost of our power, all the evil consequences of our crimes.---We must forgive all who have injured us.---We must, by fervency of prayer and constancy in meditation, endeavour to repress all worldly passions, and generate in our minds that love of goodness, and hatred of sin, which may fit us for the society of heavenly minds.---And, finally, we must commend and entrust our souls to HIM, who died

died for the sins of men ; with earnest wishes and humble hopes, that he will admit us with the labourers who entered the vineyard at the *last hour*, and associate us with the *thief* whom he pardoned on the cross !

To this great end, you will not refuse to unite with me, on bended knees, and with humbled hearts, in fervent prayer to the throne of grace ! May the Father of mercy hear our supplications, and have compassion upon us !

" O almighty Lord God, the righteous JUDGE of all the earth, who in thy providential justice dost frequently inflict severe vengeance upon sinners in this life, that thou mayest by their sad examples effectually deter others from committing the like heinous offences ; and that they themselves, truly repenting of their faults, may escape the condemnation of hell :---look down in mercy upon us, *thy sorrowful servants*, whom thou hast suffered to become the unhappy objects of offended justice in this world !

" Give us a thorough sense of all those evil *thoughts*, *words*, and *works*, which have so provoked thy patience, that thou hast been pleased to permit this public and shameful judgment to fall upon us ; and grant us such a portion of grace and godly sincerity, that we may heartily confess, and unfeignedly repent of every

every breach of those most holy laws and ordinances, which if a man do, he shall even live in them.

“ Let no root of bitterness and malice, no habitual and deadly sin, either of *omission* or *commission*, remain undisturbed in our hearts ! But enable us to make our repentance universal, without the least flattering or deceitful reserve, that so we may clear our consciences before we close our eyes.

“ And now that thou hast brought us within the view of our long home, and made us sensible, that the time of our dissolution draweth near ; endue us, we humbly pray thee, O gracious Father, with such christian fortitude, that neither the terrors of thy present dispensations, nor the remembrance of our former sins, may have power to sink our spirits into a despondency of thy everlasting mercies in the adorable Son of thy love.

“ Wean our thoughts and affections, good Lord, from all the vain and delusive enjoyments of this transitory world ; that we may not only with patient resignation submit to the appointed stroke of death, but that our faith and hope may be so elevated, that we may conceive a longing desire to be dissolved from these our earthly tabernacles, and to be with Christ, which is far better than all the happiness we can wish for besides !

“ And in a due sense of our own extraordinary want of forgiveness at thy hands, and of our utter unworthiness of the very least of all

all thy favours--of the meanest crumbs which fall from thy table---Oh! blessed Lord Jesus! make us so truly and universally charitable, that in an undissembled compliance with thy own awful command, and most endearing example, we may both freely forgive and cordially pray for our most inveterate *enemies*, *persecutors*, and *slanderers!*---Forgive them, O Lord, we beseech thee--turn their hearts, and fill them with thy love!

“ Thus, may we humbly trust, our sorrowful prayers and tears will be acceptable in thy sight. Thus shall we be qualified, through Christ, to exchange this dismal bodily confinement [and these uneasy fetters] for the glorious liberty of the sons of God.---And thus shall our legal doom upon earth be changed into a comfortable declaration of mercy in the highest heavens:---and all thro’ thy most precious and all-sufficient merits, O blessed Saviour of mankind!---who with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, livest and reignest ever, *One God*, world without end. Amen.*

* See ROSELL's *Prisoner's Director* :---a work of some merit—and which I have endeavoured, in my melancholy hours of leisure, to revise, and (I humbly hope) improve; and mean to leave behind me, in the hands of the Ordinary, as a small testimony of my sincere, but very weak, endeavours for the best welfare of unhappy men in confinement; to whom I have written a general *Address*, to be prefixed to the new edition of ROSELL.



